Resolution on the death penalty in Belarus, in particular the cases of Dzmitry Kanavalau and Uladzislau Kavalyou

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The European Parliament adopted a resolution on the death penalty in Belarus, in particular the cases of Dzmitry Kanavalau and Uladzislau Kavalyou.

The resolution was tabled by the S&D, EPP, ECR, Greens/EFA, GUE/NGL and ALDE groups.

Parliament notes that Belarus remains the only country in Europe that exercises the death penalty and still carries out executions, and mentions the executions carried out by Belarus, the most recent being death sentences which were handed down on 30 November 2011 against Dzmitry Kanavalau and Uladzislau Kavalyou by the Supreme Court of Belarus for allegedly committing terrorist attacks in 2005 in Vitebsk, in 2008 in Minsk, and in the Minsk metro in April 2011. Parliament **condemns these death sentences** and urges Alyaksandr Lukashenka to pardon both men and establish moratorium on all death sentences and executions with a view to abolishing the death penalty from the penal system by ratifying the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

It notes that according to credible reports (FIDH, Human Rights Watch), there are arguments showing that prosecutors and the Belarus Supreme Court held an unfair trial and that the investigation was marred by **serious human rights abuses and intentional disregard of important evidence** indicating the innocence of the two men and whereas, according to observers of the trial, there were serious procedural violations during the preliminary investigation and the judicial examination of the case. Members call on the competent authorities in Belarus to **carry out a full, fair and impartial investigation** of the allegations made in this context and to provide true justice for the victims of the heinous acts of terrorism in question.

Members urge the Council and the Commission to use all available tools of diplomacy and cooperation assistance to **work towards the abolition of the death penalty in Belarus** and encourage Belarusian civil society and non-governmental organisations to work towards the same. They call on the Eastern Partnership countries and Russia to urge Belarus to introduce a moratorium on the death penalty.

Parliament goes on to demand the unconditional immediate release of all political prisoners. It welcomes the EU Foreign Affairs Council decision of 23 January 2012 to **broaden sanction criteria** that pave the way for future designations of those responsible for serious human rights violations or for the repression of civil society and the democratic opposition in Belarus. Members reiterate that there cannot be any progress on EU-Belarus dialogue without progress by Belarus towards democracy, human rights and rule of law, and until all political prisoners, including the two former presidential candidates Mikalai Statkevich and Andrei Sannikau, heads of the presidential campaigns of democratic opposition candidates Pavel Seviarynets and Dzmitry Bandarenka, and Syarhey Kavalenka, a political prisoner detained for alleged breach of house arrest, who has been on a prolonged hunger strike which has led to a critical deterioration in his health and is directly threatening his life, are unconditionally released and their civil rights fully reinstated.

Lastly, the resolution encourages the Belarusian authorities to **promote the role of the judiciary in Belarus** and its activity without interference or pressure from the executive, and it condemns the continuous persecution of human rights defenders and members of the democratic opposition and the harassment of civil society activists and the independent media in Belarus for political reasons.